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COMICS PRESENTS
BLACK ORCHID

CHARLES ATLAS, World's No. 1 Body Builder, says:

Don't Be Half A Man!

Let ME SHOW How I Can Make You a Real HE-MAN From Head to Toe — in Just 15 Minutes a Day! Take a good honest look at yourself! Are you proud of your body — or are you satisfied to go through life being just "half the man" you could be? No matter how ashamed you are of your present physical condition — or how old or young you are — the "sleeping" muscles already present in your body can turn you into a real HE-MAN! Believe me, I know — because I was once a skinny, scrawny 97-pound half-alive weakling! People used to laugh at my build and make fun of me. I was ashamed to strip for sports or the beach . . . shy of girls . . . afraid of healthy competition.

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- ☐ BROAD BACK & SHOULDERS
- ☐ TIRELESS LEGS
- ☐ MORE WEIGHT
- ☐ MAGNETIC PERSONALITY

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CHARLES ATLAS ON TV

THE INSULT THAT MADE A MAN OUT OF 'MAC'

HEY! QUIT KICKING THAT SAND IN OUR FACES!
THAT MAN IS THE WORST NUISANCE ON THE BEACH
LISTEN HERE, I'D SMASH YOUR FACE... ONLY YOU'RE SO SKINNY YOU MIGHT DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY!
THE BIG BULLY! I'LL GET EVEN SOME DAY
OH DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU, LITTLE BOY!
DARN IT! I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BEING A SCARECROW! CHARLES ATLAS SAYS HE CAN GIVE ME A REAL BODY. ALL RIGHT! I'LL GAMBLE A STAMP AND GET HIS FREE BOOK!
BOY! IT DIDN'T TAKE ATLAS LONG TO DO THIS FOR ME! WHAT MUSCLES! THAT BULLY WON'T SHOVE ME AROUND AGAIN!
THERE'S THAT BIG STIFF AGAIN, SHOWING OFF IN FRONT OF GRACE AND THE CROWD. WELL, IT'S MY TURN ... THIS TIME!
WHAM! - NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY!
OH, MAC! YOU ARE A REAL MAN AFTER ALL!

SHE APPEARS WHERE THERE IS EVIL, AND IS GONE IN A TWINKLING ONCE IT HAS BEEN CONQUERED! NO ONE KNOWS WHO SHE IS, OR FROM WHENCE SHE ACQUIRED HER EXTRAORDINARY POWERS... SHE HAS THE STRENGTH OF A REGIMENT, FLIES THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A BIRD OF PREY... AND HAS THE BEAUTY AND COMPASSION OF A YOUNG GIRL!... MANY HAVE TRIED TO GUESS HER SECRETS, BUT ALL HAVE FAILED...
TONIGHT, ONE MAN... AN EVIL MAN... WILL BELIEVE HE HAS UNRAVELLED HER STRANGE MYSTIQUE, AND BEFORE MIDNIGHT HE WILL ISSUE HIS FATEFUL.....
CHALLENGE TO THE BLACK ORCHID
WRITTEN BY SHELDON MAYER • ART BY TONY DEZUÑIGA • EDITOR JOE ORLANDO

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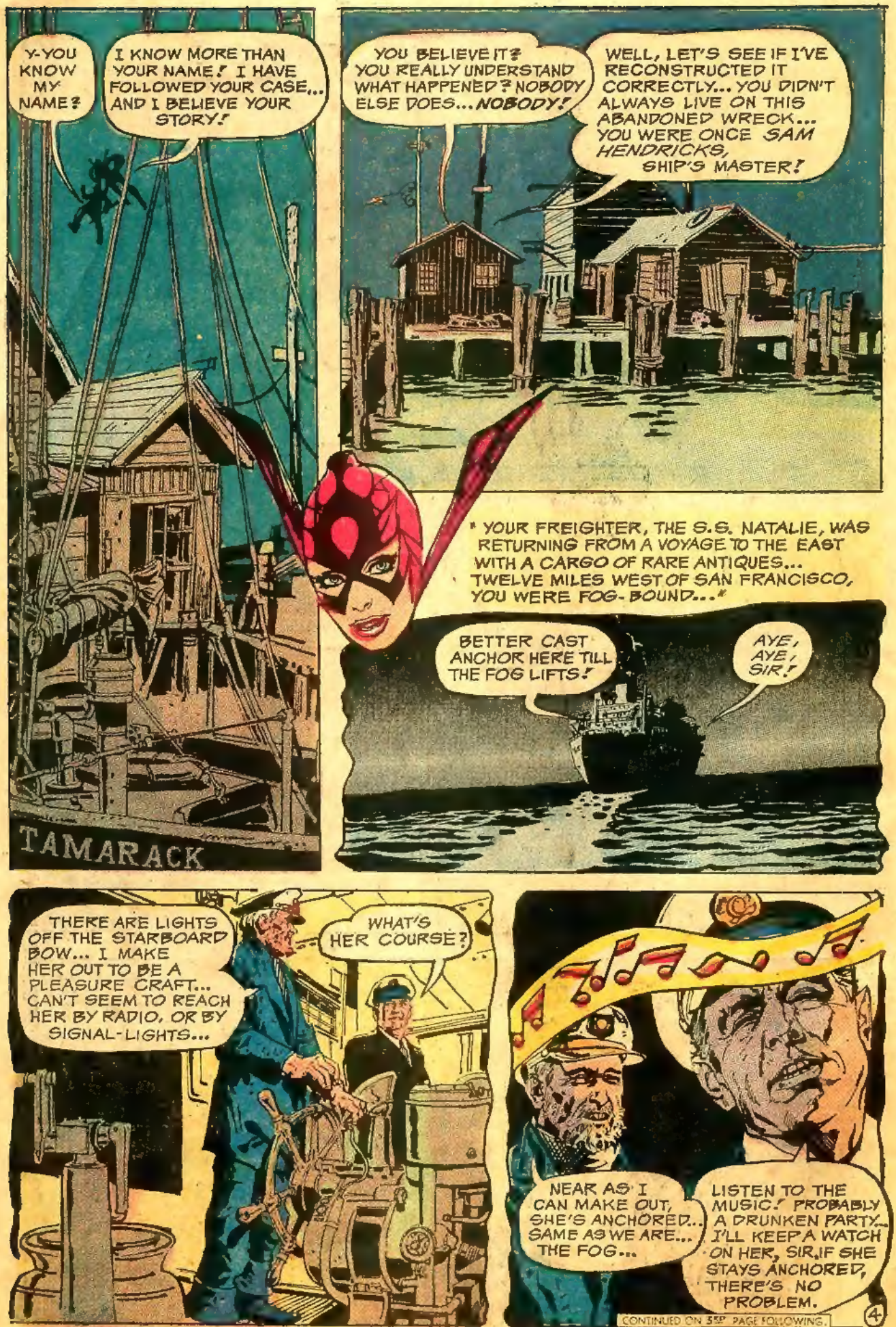
A LONE FIGURE, CROUCHING MOTIONLESS BEHIND THE MASSED PACKING CRATES THAT LINE THE WHARF, CAREFULLY AIMS A RIFLE AT THE BIG MAN WHO STEPS OUT OF THE LIMOUSINE...
SUDDENLY, A FIGURE APPEARS FROM NOWHERE, AND...
HEY! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?
HUH?.. SOMEBODY'S SHOOTING AT ME!
I SEE HIM! C'MON, FERD! IT'S ONLY ONE GUY! LET'S GET 'IM!
RIGHT!
K-FAM
DON'T USE THOSE GUNS!
OOOF!
M-MEEE!
IT'S A CHICK! SHE... SHE'S FLYIN'!
IMPOSSIBLE! PEOPLE DON'T FLY! THE FOG IS PLAYING TRICKS ON OUR EYES! GO ON! PICK UP YOUR GUNS AND GET THAT SNIPER!
...HE'S BEHIND THOSE PACKING CRATES!
IT'S THAT DAME AGAIN!.. SHE IS FLYING! AND SHE'S CARRYING THAT SNIPER AS IF HE WAS A FEATHER!
SHOOT! SHOOT HIM!
WE ARE SHOOTING AT HIM... BUT SHE KEEPS GETTING IN THE WAY...
... AND THE SLUGS JUST BOUNCE OFF HER!
2

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! I SEE IT, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
WHOEVER SHE IS, SHE'S A CHICK! AND THAT'S WHY SHE SAVED MY LIFE! CHICKS CAN'T RESIST ME! LOOK... SHE DROPPED SOMETHING!
IT'S A FLOWER! AN ORCHID...: A BLACK ORCHID!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU? SHE'S CRAZY ABOUT ME!
IT'S POWER! CHICKS JUST CAN'T RESIST POWER!
LOOK...THERE'S A NOTE IN IT! IT'S TO YOU, BARRY!.. IT SAYS: " BARRY DE MORTE: YOU HAVE COMMITTED A GREAT WRONG TO MANY GOOD MEN! YOU HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT TOMORROW TO TURN YOURSELF OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES!" IT'S SIGNED...BLACK ORCHID!
HA-HA! SHE KNOWS WHAT I LIKE! A CHALLENGE! BUT I DON'T ACCEPT! ...HEY, GIRLIE! D'YOU HEAR ME? I DON'T ACCEPT! INSTEAD... I CHALLENGE YOU TO STOP ME FROM DOING IT AGAIN BY TOMORROW NIGHT! MIDNIGHT! HA-HA-HA!
WHO ARE YOU? WHY DID YOU STOP ME? THAT MAN DESERVES TO DIE! DO YOU HEAR HIM DOWN THERE?
YES, I HEAR HIM! AND I UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW YOU FEEL, SAM HENDRICKS! BUT YOU ARE NOT A MURDERER!


Y-YOU KNOW MY NAME?
I KNOW MORE THAN YOUR NAME! I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR CASE... AND I BELIEVE YOUR STORY!
TAMARACK
YOU BELIEVE IT? YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED? NOBODY ELSE DOES... NOBODY!
WELL, LET'S SEE IF I'VE RECONSTRUCTED IT CORRECTLY... YOU DIDN'T ALWAYS LIVE ON THIS ABANDONED WRECK... YOU WERE ONCE SAM HENDRICKS, SHIP'S MASTER!
"YOUR FREIGHTER, THE S.S. NATALIE, WAS RETURNING FROM A VOYAGE TO THE EAST WITH A CARGO OF RARE ANTIQUES... TWELVE MILES WEST OF SAN FRANCISCO, YOU WERE FOG-BOUND..."
BETTER CAST ANCHOR HERE TILL THE FOG LIFTS!
AYE, AYE, SIR!
THERE ARE LIGHTS OFF THE STARBOARD BOW... I MAKE HER OUT TO BE A PLEASURE CRAFT... CAN'T SEEM TO REACH HER BY RADIO, OR BY SIGNAL-LIGHTS...
WHAT'S HER COURSE?
NEAR AS I CAN MAKE OUT, SHE'S ANCHORED... SAME AS WE ARE... THE FOG...
LISTEN TO THE MUSIC! PROBABLY A DRUNKEN PARTY... I'LL KEEP A WATCH ON HER, SIR. IF SHE STAYS ANCHORED, THERE'S NO PROBLEM.
CONTINUED ON 5SP PAGE FOLLOWING.
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PETE! HOW YOU MAKING OUT?
NOT TOO GOOD, JOE. I CAN'T SEEM TO HACK IT... NO JOB I CAN GET PAYS ANY MONEY.

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CIE, PETE! CIE HELPED ME LEARN ELECTRONICS ON MY OFF DUTY HOURS--BY MAIL! IT'S THE SCIENCE OF THE SEVENTIES, MAN.

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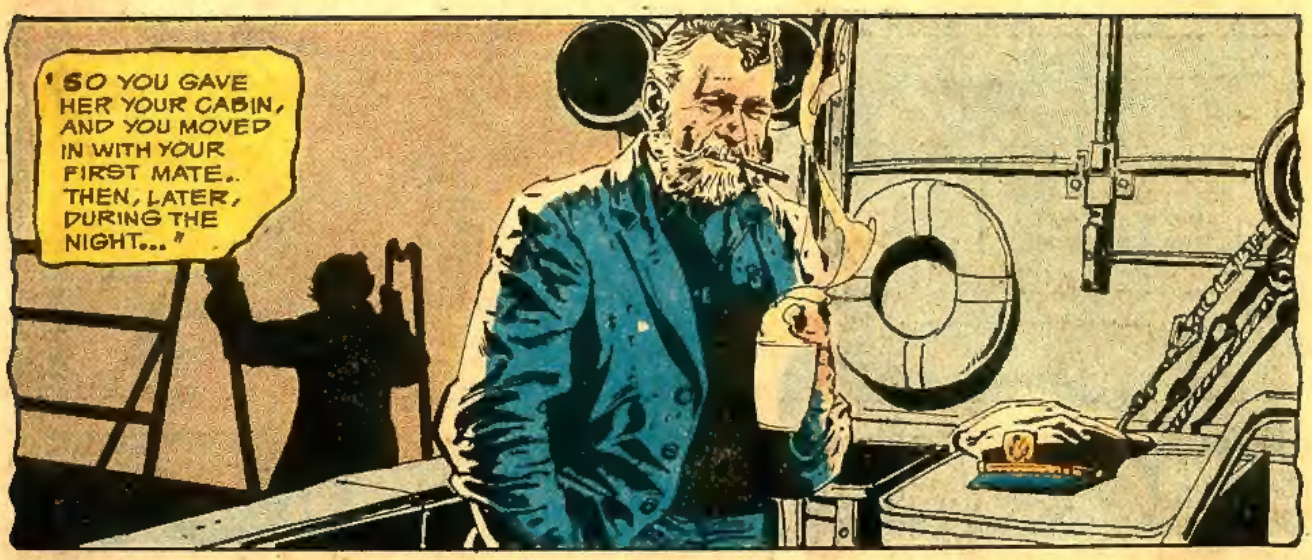
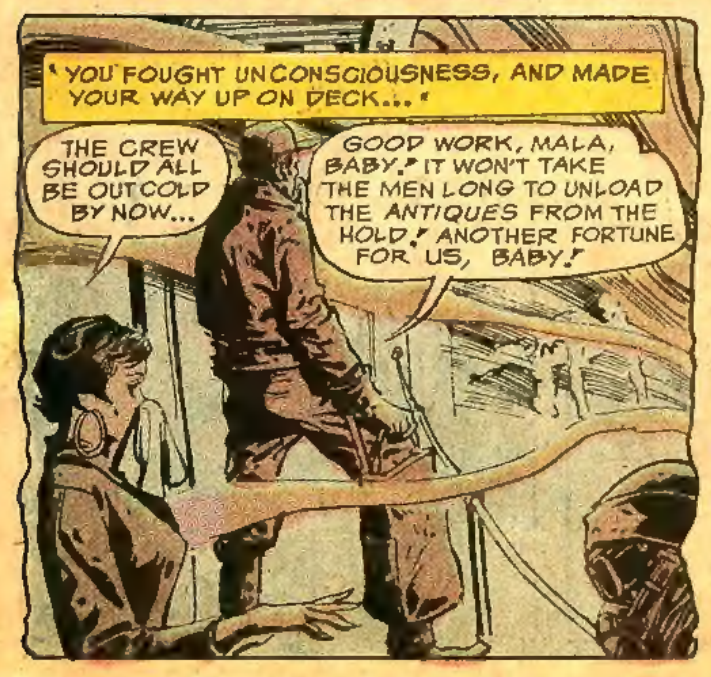
"THEN, ABOVE THE SOUND OF THE MUSIC ABOARD THE PLEASURE YACHT, YOU HEARD AN UNMISTAKABLE SCREAM THROUGH THE FOG."
NO! DON'T TOUCH ME! I'LL JUMP!
WHAT WAS THAT?
"...THEN A SPLASH..!"
I THINK I MAKE OUT SOMEONE SWIMMING TOWARD US, SIR.
HAVE THE MEN LOWER A BOAT! PROBABLY SOME DRUNK FROM THE YACHT...
SPLASH
"...BUT IT WASN'T A DRUNK... ONLY A FRIGHTENED GIRL."
GET HER SOME DRY CLOTHES AND TAKE HER BACK TO THE YACHT.
NO! PLEASE, CAPTAIN... DON'T MAKE ME GO BACK TO THOSE... THOSE DRUNKEN DEGENERATES!
IF IT'S THAT BAD ABOARD THAT YACHT, I'LL CONTACT THE HARBOR POLICE, MISS...
NO! NO! PLEASE DON'T! BARRY WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME... HE'D FIND TERRIBLE WAYS TO GET EVEN! PLEASE DON'T CALL THE POLICE! THAT MAN IS A MONSTER!
WELL, I CAN BE PRETTY MEAN WHEN I'M CROSSED, TOO! NOBODY CAN GET AWAY WITH...
OH, PLEASE! IF YOU CALL THE HARBOR POLICE, I'LL JUMP OVERBOARD... I SWEAR!
5


"SO YOU GAVE HER YOUR CABIN, AND YOU MOVED IN WITH YOUR FIRST MATE.. THEN, LATER, DURING THE NIGHT..."

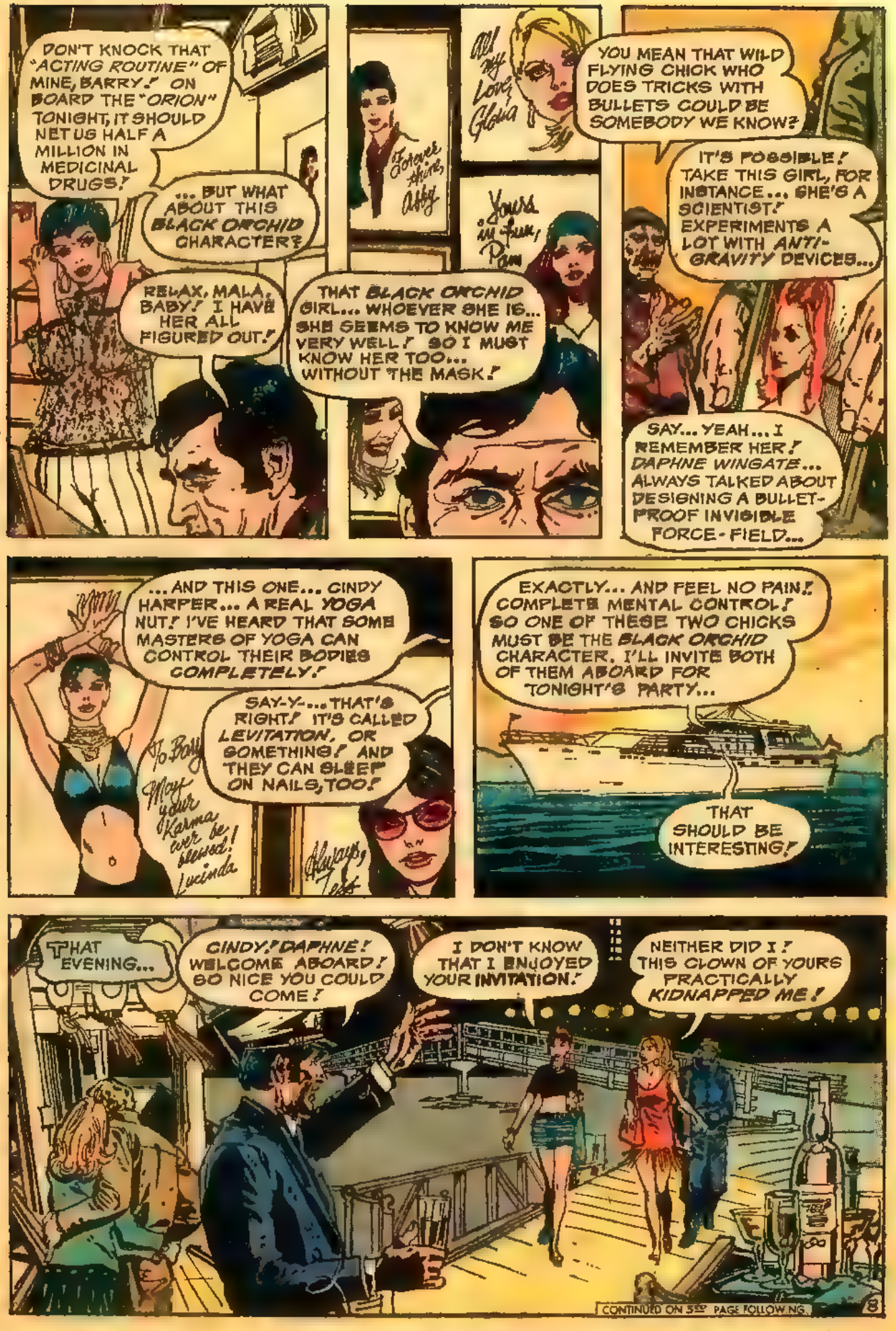
"...AS NEARLY AS YOU COULD FIGURE IT OUT LATER, SHE MUST HAVE USED SOME KIND OF GAS-GUN..."
...CHOKE... GASP...
VROOOSH

"A MINUTE LATER, IN THE MATE'S CABIN, A STRANGE ODOR WOKE YOU UP... YOU COULD BARELY SEE... THE CABIN WAS FILLED WITH A SMOKE-LIKE SUBSTANCE..."
GASP... WHA...? CHOKE...


"YOU FOUGHT UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND MADE YOUR WAY UP ON DECK..."
THE CREW SHOULD ALL BE OUT COLD BY NOW...
GOOD WORK, MALA, BABY! IT WON'T TAKE THE MEN LONG TO UNLOAD THE ANTIQUES FROM THE HOLD! ANOTHER FORTUNE FOR US, BABY!

HEY! STOP THAT! YOU CAN'T... CHOKE!!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THEY WERE ALL UNCONSCIOUS!
NO PROBLEM!
"SHE BLASTED YOU AGAIN WITH HER GAS-GUN! THE BIG MAN REMOVED THE HANDKERCHIEF FROM HIS FACE FOR AN INSTANT, AND..."

"... JUST BEFORE YOU PASSED OUT, YOU SAW A FACE YOU RECOGNIZED FROM THE NEWSPAPERS... BARRY DE MORTE, WEALTHY IMPORTER, YACHTSMAN, PLAYBOY..."
"LATER, THE COAST GUARD FOUND YOU UNCONSCIOUS IN A LIFEBOAT, SMELLING TO HIGH HEAVEN OF WHISKEY... THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A FIRE AT SEA! THE NATALIE HAD BURNED AND SUNK WITH ALL HANDS..."
NOBODY BELIEVED YOUR STORY BECAUSE THE MARITIME BOARD OF INQUIRY FOUND THERE HAD BEEN NO FOG THAT NIGHT!
YOU WERE FOUND GUILTY OF CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED, MISS... I LOST MY MASTER'S LICENSE... CAN'T EVEN GET A SEAMAN'S BERTH...
I THINK I CAN PROVE YOUR STORY IS TRUE... BUT I WILL NEED YOUR HELP.
GLADLY... BUT HOW CAN YOU--?
TRUST ME!
TRUST HER? SHE'S HALF MY SIZE... FLIES THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A BIRD... CARRIED ME LIKE A BABY... HOW CAN I TRUST HER?
NEXT MORNING, ABOARD DE MORTE'S YACHT...
..SO THEN BARRY DARES HER TO STOP US! HA-HA! YOU SHOULDA BEEN THERE, MALA! WILD!
BARRY, WE WON'T HIT THAT FREIGHTER NOW, WILL WE?
AND MISS THAT ACTING ROUTINE OF YOURS? OF COURSE WE'LL HIT IT TONIGHT!
EVEN NOW I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M REALLY SEEING HER! IT'S A DREAM! IT'S GOT TO BE!
7


DON'T KNOCK THAT "ACTING ROUTINE" OF MINE, BARRY! ON BOARD THE "ORION" TONIGHT, IT SHOULD NET US HALF A MILLION IN MEDICINAL DRUGS!
... BUT WHAT ABOUT THIS BLACK ORCHID CHARACTER?
RELAX, MALA, BABY! I HAVE HER ALL FIGURED OUT!
Forever Yours, Abby
All my Love, Gloria
Yours in fun, Pam
THAT BLACK ORCHID GIRL... WHOEVER SHE IS... SHE SEEMS TO KNOW ME VERY WELL! SO I MUST KNOW HER TOO... WITHOUT THE MASK!
YOU MEAN THAT WILD FLYING CHICK WHO DOES TRICKS WITH BULLETS COULD BE SOMEBODY WE KNOW?
IT'S POSSIBLE! TAKE THIS GIRL, FOR INSTANCE... SHE'S A SCIENTIST! EXPERIMENTS A LOT WITH ANTI-GRAVITY DEVICES...
SAY... YEAH... I REMEMBER HER! DAPHNE WINGATE... ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT DESIGNING A BULLET-PROOF INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD...
... AND THIS ONE... CINDY HARPER... A REAL YOGA NUT! I'VE HEARD THAT SOME MASTERS OF YOGA CAN CONTROL THEIR BODIES COMPLETELY!
SAY-Y-... THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S CALLED LEVITATION, OR SOMETHING! AND THEY CAN SLEEP ON NAILS, TOO!
To Bob, May your Karma ever be blessed! Lucinda
Always, Tess
EXACTLY... AND FEEL NO PAIN! COMPLETE MENTAL CONTROL! SO ONE OF THESE TWO CHICKS MUST BE THE BLACK ORCHID CHARACTER. I'LL INVITE BOTH OF THEM ABOARD FOR TONIGHT'S PARTY...
THAT SHOULD BE INTERESTING!
THAT EVENING...
CINDY! DAPHNE! WELCOME ABOARD! SO NICE YOU COULD COME!
I DON'T KNOW THAT I ENJOYED YOUR INVITATION!
NEITHER DID I! THIS CLOWN OF YOURS PRACTICALLY KIDNAPPED ME!
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING
8

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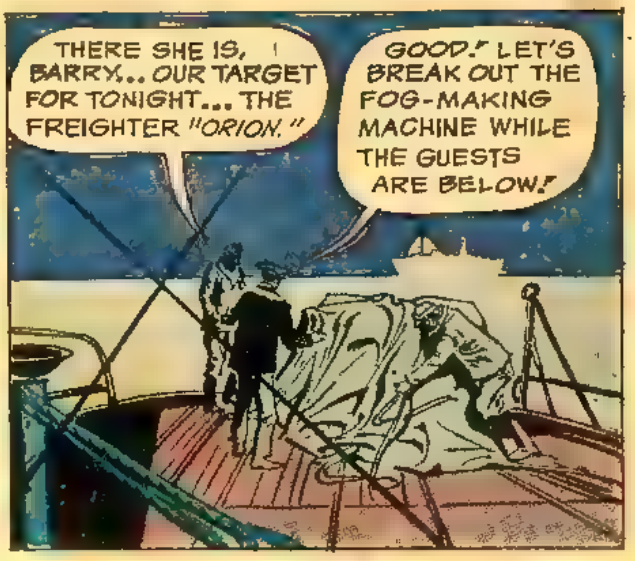
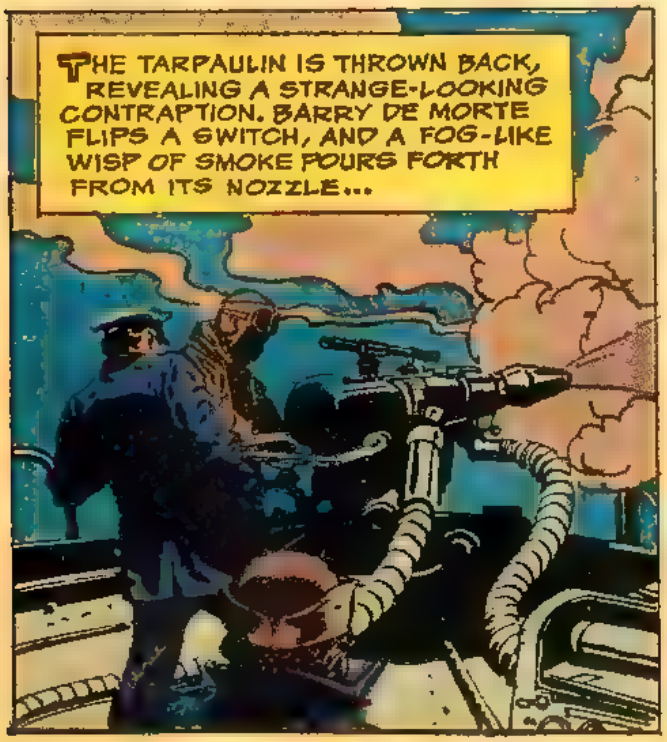
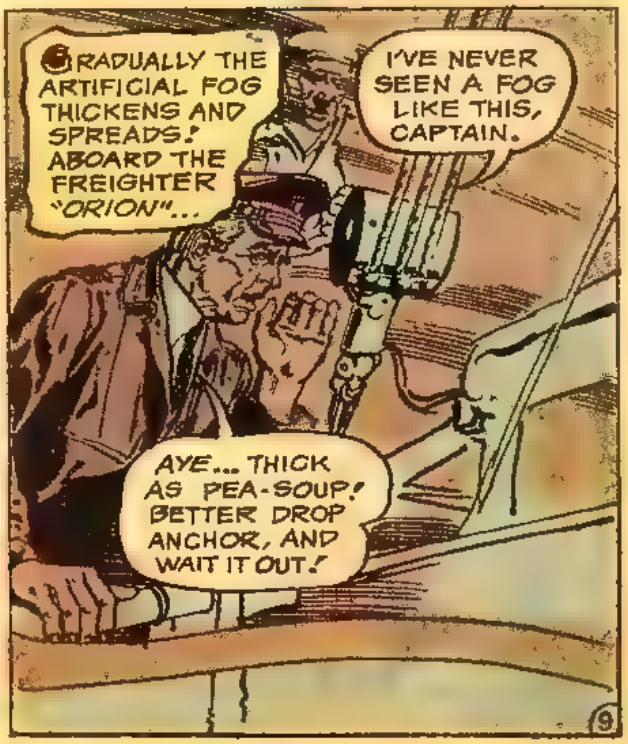
THAT WAS THE GENERAL IDEA, DAPHNE... I WOULDN'T WANT YOU GIRLS TO HAVE MISSED THIS PARTY FOR ANYTHING!
AYE, AYE, SIR!
YOU CAN CAST OFF, NOW, MR. SALINE.

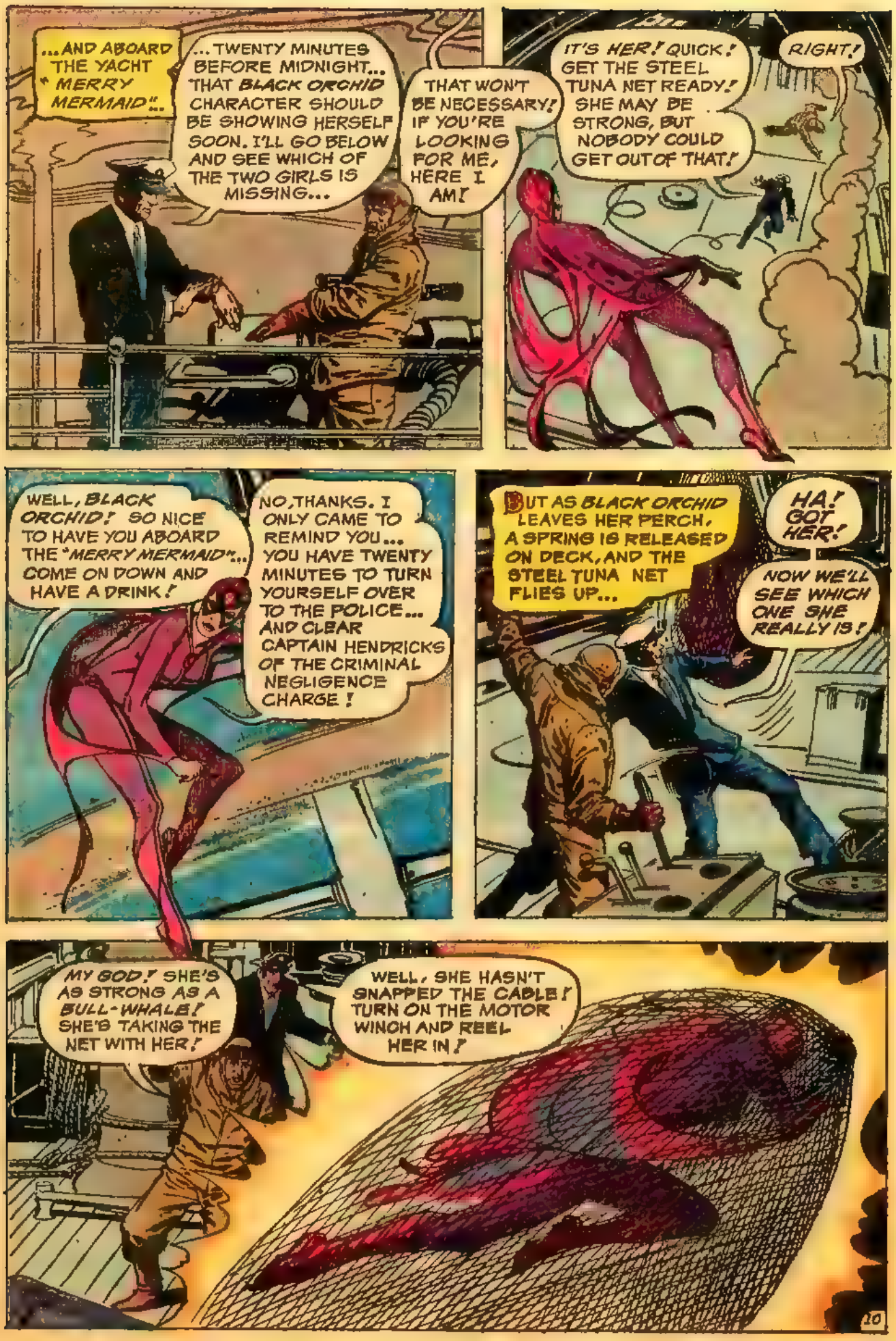
NEITHER OF YOUR NEW GUESTS SEEMS HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH YOU, BARRY.
OF COURSE NOT! ...THIS IS A BATTLE! WHICH-EVER OF THEM IS THE BLACK ORCHID...WANTS ME TO WIN... BUT SHE WANTS ME TO WORK FOR IT!

HOW INTERESTING! WELL, AMUSE YOURSELF! I'LL GET READY FOR THAT SWIM!
NOT YET! STAY AND KEEP AN EYE ON THOSE TWO! I'VE GOT BUSINESS ON DECK!

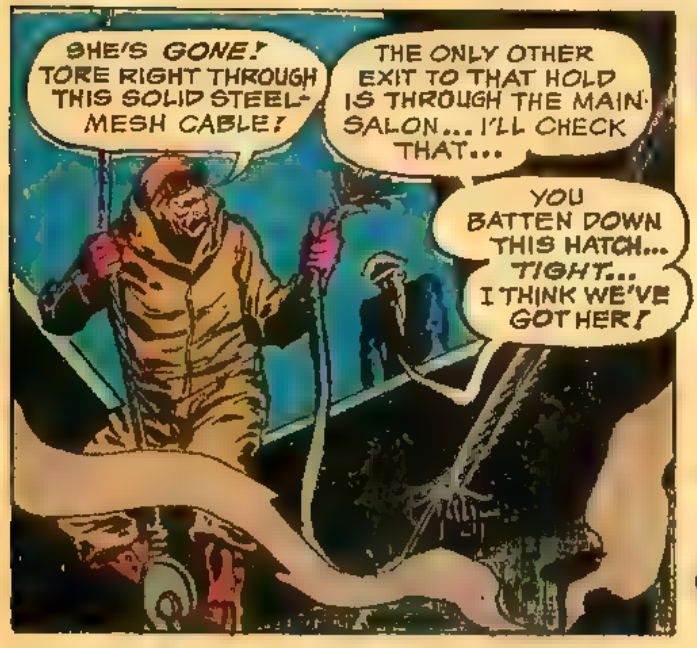

THERE SHE IS, BARRY... OUR TARGET FOR TONIGHT... THE FREIGHTER "ORION."
GOOD! LET'S BREAK OUT THE FOG-MAKING MACHINE WHILE THE GUESTS ARE BELOW!


THE TARPAULIN IS THROWN BACK, REVEALING A STRANGE-LOOKING CONTRAPTION. BARRY DE MORTE FLIPS A SWITCH, AND A FOG-LIKE WISP OF SMOKE POURS FORTH FROM ITS NOZZLE...


GRADUALLY THE ARTIFICIAL FOG THICKENS AND SPREADS! ABOARD THE FREIGHTER "ORION"...
I'VE NEVER SEEN A FOG LIKE THIS, CAPTAIN.
AYE... THICK AS PEA-SOUP! BETTER DROP ANCHOR, AND WAIT IT OUT!


...AND ABOARD THE YACHT "MERRY MERMAID"...
...TWENTY MINUTES BEFORE MIDNIGHT... THAT BLACK ORCHID CHARACTER SHOULD BE SHOWING HERSELF SOON. I'LL GO BELOW AND SEE WHICH OF THE TWO GIRLS IS MISSING...
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY! IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ME, HERE I AM!
IT'S HER! QUICK! GET THE STEEL TUNA NET READY! SHE MAY BE STRONG, BUT NOBODY COULD GET OUT OF THAT!
RIGHT!
WELL, BLACK ORCHID! SO NICE TO HAVE YOU ABOARD THE "MERRY MERMAID"... COME ON DOWN AND HAVE A DRINK!
NO, THANKS. I ONLY CAME TO REMIND YOU... YOU HAVE TWENTY MINUTES TO TURN YOURSELF OVER TO THE POLICE... AND CLEAR CAPTAIN HENDRICKS OF THE CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE CHARGE!
BUT AS BLACK ORCHID LEAVES HER PERCH, A SPRING IS RELEASED ON DECK, AND THE STEEL TUNA NET FLIES UP...
HA! GOT HER!
NOW WE'LL SEE WHICH ONE SHE REALLY IS!
MY GOD! SHE'S AS STRONG AS A BULL-WHALE! SHE'S TAKING THE NET WITH HER!
WELL, SHE HASN'T SNAPPED THE CABLE! TURN ON THE MOTOR WINCH AND REEL HER IN!

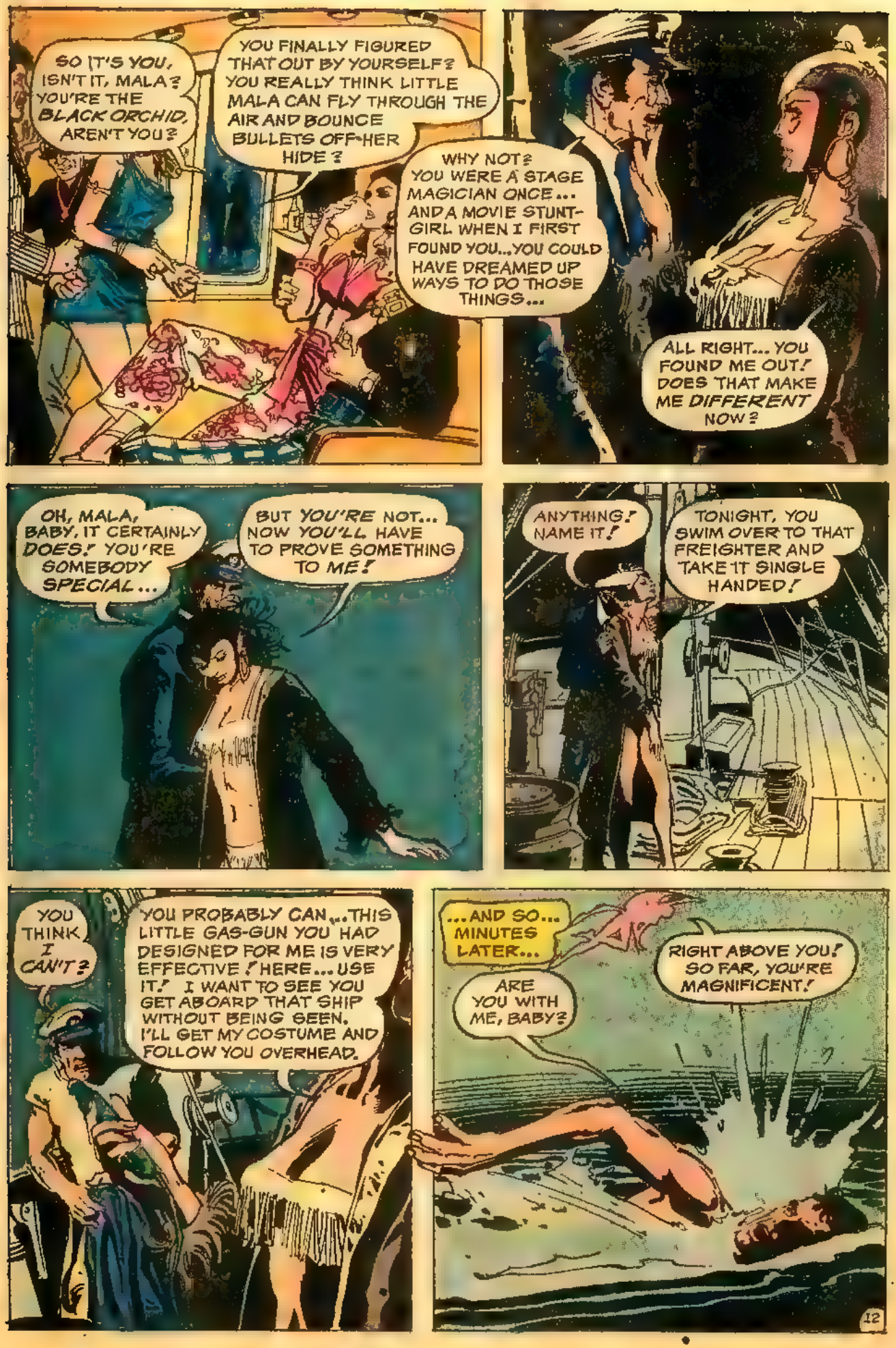
SHE WENT DOWN INTO THE CARGO HOLD... NET AND ALL!
AFTER HER! QUICK!

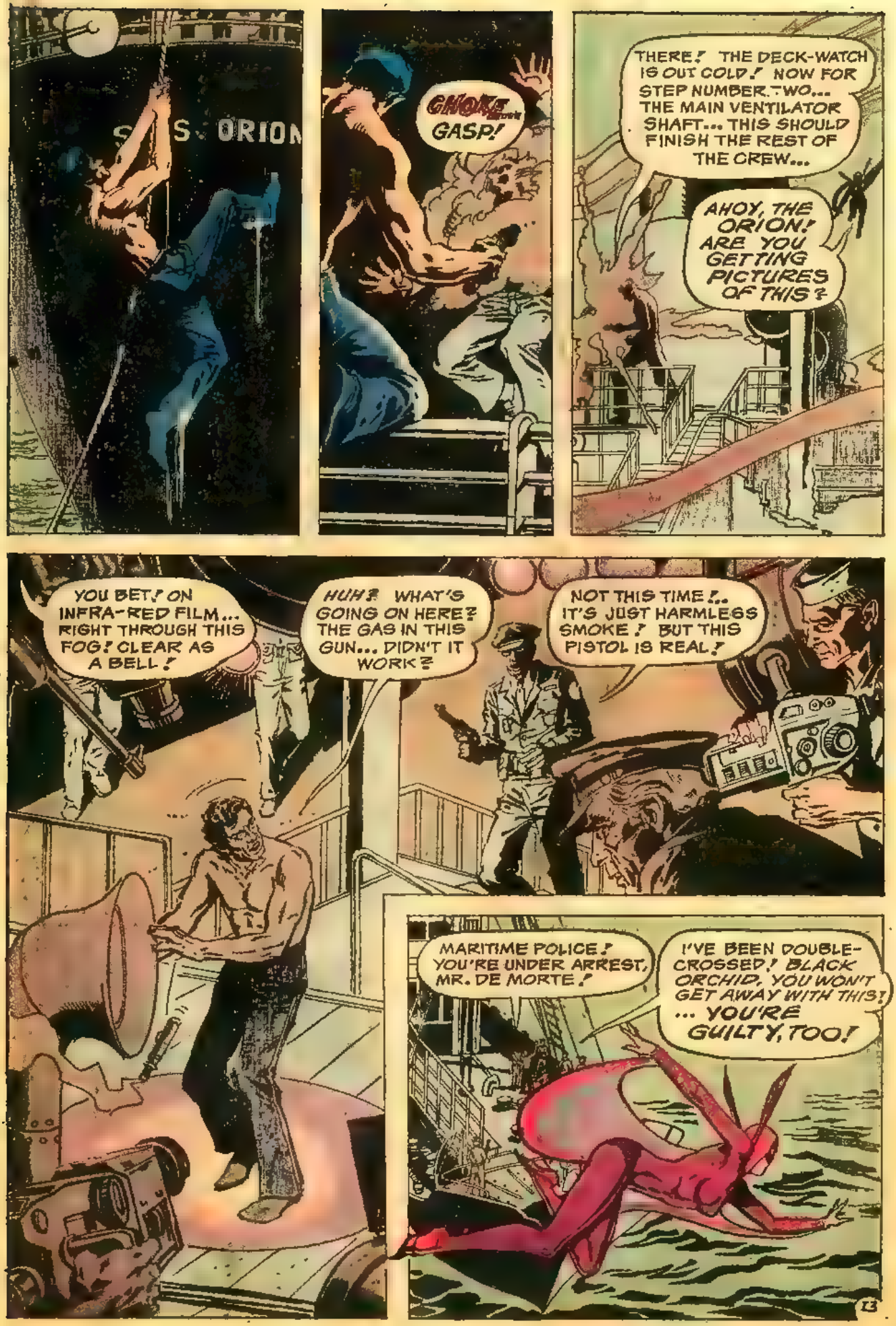

SHE'S GONE! TORE RIGHT THROUGH THIS SOLID STEEL-MESH CABLE!
THE ONLY OTHER EXIT TO THAT HOLD IS THROUGH THE MAIN SALON... I'LL CHECK THAT...
YOU BATTEN DOWN THIS HATCH... TIGHT... I THINK WE'VE GOT HER!

5 SECONDS LATER...
NOW, EITHER CINDY OR DAPHNE WILL BE MISSING FROM THE PARTY... AND WE'LL KNOW WHO THE BLACK ORCHID IS!

HUH? YOU'RE BOTH HERE? BUT WHERE'S MALA?
SHE WENT TO HER CABIN SOME TIME AGO... SAID SHE HAD TO POWDER HER NOSE...
OH... SPEAK OF THE DEVIL... HERE SHE COMES NOW...

MALA, COME UP ON DECK... I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!
WONDERFUL! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU NOTICED ME... AS A WOMAN!


SO IT'S YOU, ISN'T IT, MALA? YOU'RE THE BLACK ORCHID, AREN'T YOU?
YOU FINALLY FIGURED THAT OUT BY YOURSELF? YOU REALLY THINK LITTLE MALA CAN FLY THROUGH THE AIR AND BOUNCE BULLETS OFF HER HIDE?
WHY NOT? YOU WERE A STAGE MAGICIAN ONCE... AND A MOVIE STUNT-GIRL WHEN I FIRST FOUND YOU...YOU COULD HAVE DREAMED UP WAYS TO DO THOSE THINGS...
ALL RIGHT... YOU FOUND ME OUT! DOES THAT MAKE ME DIFFERENT NOW?
OH, MALA, BABY, IT CERTAINLY DOES! YOU'RE SOMEBODY SPECIAL...
BUT YOU'RE NOT... NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO PROVE SOMETHING TO ME!
ANYTHING! NAME IT!
TONIGHT, YOU SWIM OVER TO THAT FREIGHTER AND TAKE IT SINGLE HANDED!
YOU THINK I CAN'T?
YOU PROBABLY CAN...THIS LITTLE GAS-GUN YOU HAD DESIGNED FOR ME IS VERY EFFECTIVE! HERE...USE IT! I WANT TO SEE YOU GET ABOARD THAT SHIP WITHOUT BEING SEEN. I'LL GET MY COSTUME AND FOLLOW YOU OVERHEAD.
...AND SO... MINUTES LATER...
ARE YOU WITH ME, BABY?
RIGHT ABOVE YOU! SO FAR, YOU'RE MAGNIFICENT!
12


S.S. ORION
CHOKE cough GASP!
THERE! THE DECK-WATCH IS OUT COLD! NOW FOR STEP NUMBER TWO... THE MAIN VENTILATOR SHAFT... THIS SHOULD FINISH THE REST OF THE CREW...
AHOY, THE ORION! ARE YOU GETTING PICTURES OF THIS?
YOU BET! ON INFRA-RED FILM... RIGHT THROUGH THIS FOG! CLEAR AS A BELL!
HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? THE GAS IN THIS GUN... DIDN'T IT WORK?
NOT THIS TIME!.. IT'S JUST HARMLESS SMOKE! BUT THIS PISTOL IS REAL!
MARITIME POLICE! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, MR. DE MORTE!
I'VE BEEN DOUBLE-CROSSED! BLACK ORCHID, YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS! ... YOU'RE GUILTY, TOO!
13

WELL, SAM, YOU WERE RIGHT... WE DID GET THE EVIDENCE WE NEED TO CLEAR YOU!
AYE! THANKS TO THAT ANGEL UP THERE!
DON'T LET HER GET AWAY! SHE'S MALA MILES... THE GIRL WHO HELPED ME ON THE OTHER JOBS!
WE'LL DEAL WITH HER WHEN WE GET BACK TO YOUR YACHT FOR THE REST OF THE EVIDENCE... MEANWHILE I MUST ADVISE YOU NOT TO SPEAK WITHOUT YOUR ATTORNEY.
BUT YOU'RE LETTING THAT BLACK ORCHID CHARACTER GET AWAY! I TELL YOU, SHE'S MALA, MY ACCOMPLICE!
MINUTES LATER, ABOARD THE YACHT, "MERRY MERMAID"...
LOOK! I'LL PROVE IT! THIS IS MALA'S CABIN... THERE'S BOUND TO BE EVIDENCE IN HERE THAT SHE'S...
CLICK
BARRY, YOU CREEP! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? I'VE BEEN TIED UP HERE SINCE THE PARTY STARTED! ...I'VE BEEN SCREAMING MY HEAD OFF, BUT WITH THAT WILD MUSIC UP THERE, NOBODY HEARD ME!
HUH? MALA! YOU'RE HERE! ...BUT I DON'T GET IT!
A RUBBER MASK OF MALA'S FACE... A RED WIG... SO IT WASN'T MALA I WAS TALKING TO BEFORE... IT WAS THE BLACK ORCHID... WHOEVER SHE IS...

...IF SHE'S NOT MALA... NOT CINDY... NOT DAPHNE... WHO IS SHE?
SHE'S THAT GIRL UP THERE! YOU CAN SEE HER CLEARLY, NOW THAT WE'VE TURNED OFF YOUR FOG-MAKING MACHINE... SEE?
15
I KNOW! I KNOW! BUT WHO IS SHE?
A MASTER OF DISGUISE LIKE HER? COULD'VE BEEN ANY ONE OF YOUR GUESTS... OR NONE OF 'EM...
WHO KNOWS?

DATELINE: ADVENTURE

J-3156

Dear Editor:

While it was more than the proverbial stone's throw from perfection, Adventure #426 was a step in the right direction. Even if you have to take small steps, better a slight wait for magnificence than to go backwards.

The high point of the magazine was the return of the Vigilante. "Snow-White Death" has to be one of Cary Bates' best scripts yet. Usually I shudder when I read his by-line, but I actually liked this story. Even the Sekowsky-Giordano art was above par. Big Mike's kinda blown his last few jobs, but "Snow-White Death" was better than some of his superior Wonder Woman art. More stories of this caliber would be appreciated very much.

Moving down another notch on the totem pole, we find another Captain Fear bomb. Though it was better than last issue's, it was still rather crummy. If you don't stop naming every other character "Captain So-And-So," the Pentagon's gonna be on your back. I like Al Nino's work, but sometimes its excessive scratchiness has an adverse effect.

Low contender on the line was the nice little escapist story of "The Adventurer's Club." The only thing that saved this one from oblivion was Jim Aparo's fine artwork. This feature and Captain Fear have got to go.

Keith Griffin, Mobile, Alabama

Dear Keith:

Does The Black Orchid fit your recipe for magnificence? That goes for all of you readers! We are planning to feature The Black Orchid in three issues, of which this is the second. If you want to see more of her adventures, write quickly. It takes us quite a while to get sales reports, so your letters will have to be our guide. Get out there and write!

Dear Joe,

Just a few comments about the new Adventure Comics:

The Adventurer's Club idea stinks. I don't mind bizarre stories; in fact I enjoy them. But the use of a reappearing host is better suited to television. They don't seem to make it across in comics.

Captain Fear is great! Alex Nino's art is outstanding, but it does need some improvements, especially in the lines and angles department.

I'd like to see longer stories (and less features per issue, natch), and revivals of super-heroes like Deadman, Aquaman, and Adam Strange.

Jay D. Baker, Aurora, Colorado

Dear Jay:

Do 15 pagers (like this issue) fit your definition of longer stories? As to the revivals, Deadman is in the works for a future issue of Adventure Comics, Aquaman remains a fairly active member of The Justice League, and new Adam Strange stories are Julie Schwartz's department.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE NEW ADVENTURE COMICS AND THE BLACK ORCHID? Send us your letters to help us plan future issues. That's Dateline:Adventure, National Periodical Publications, 909 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

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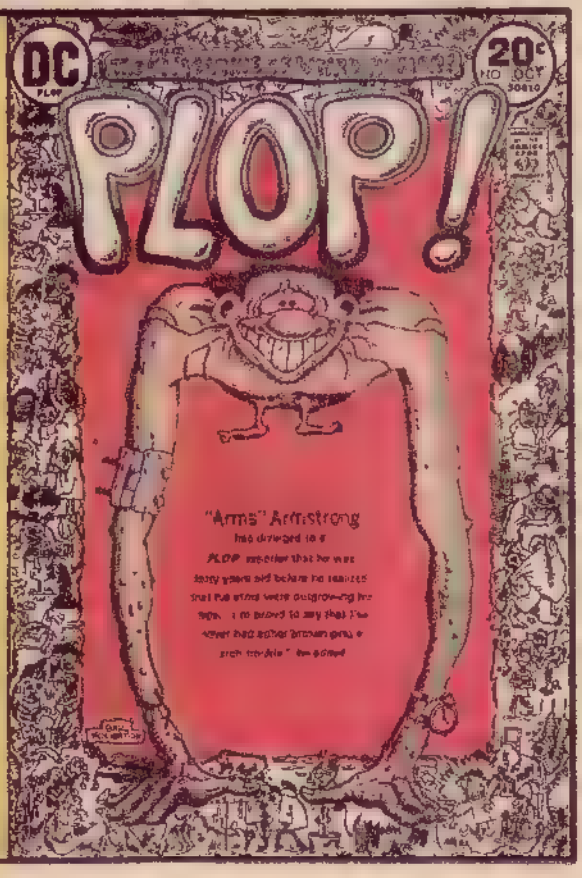


DIRECT CURRENTS

July is here, school is out, and here at DC we're getting ready to spring three super-star surprises on you! Premiering in this month's line-up of mags are **BLACK MAGIC, CHAMPION SPORTS STORIES,** and the most mysterious pulp hero of all—**THE SHADOW!** Not to mention the debut of **Manhunter** in **Detective Comics.** We're not neglecting our other titles, though . . . here's a list of the ones coming your way in the **FIRST WEEK OF JULY:**

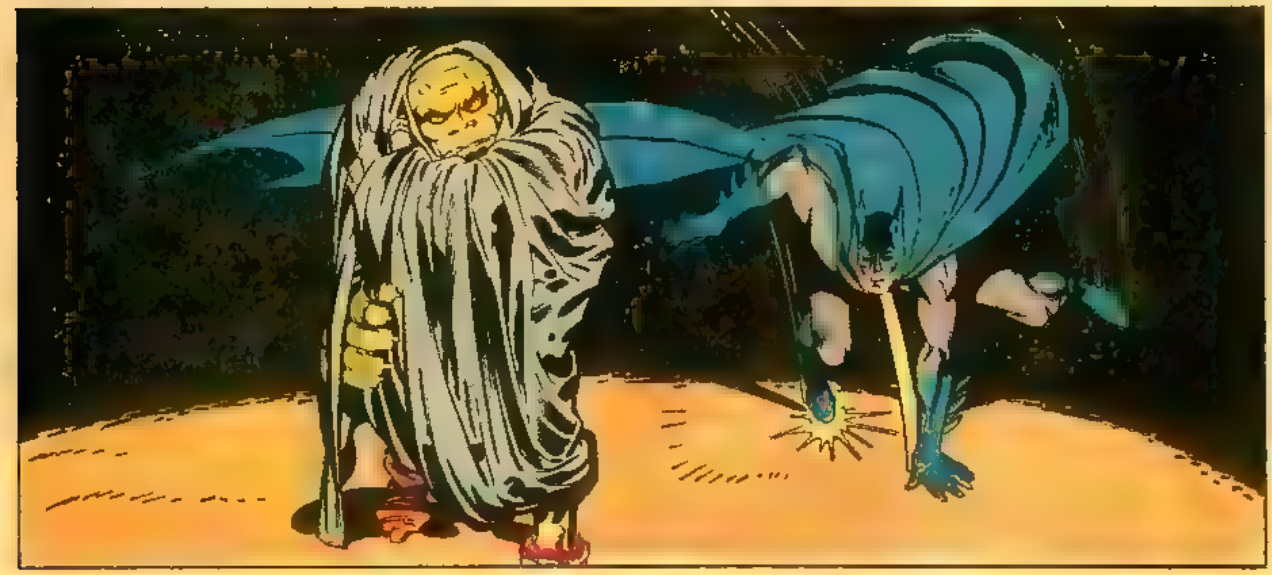
Get ready for a new look in the mysterious world of **THE PHANTOM STRANGER** when he meets up with the wiles of "Doctor Zorn: Soul Master," a very different kind of villain. Beginning with this issue **(November, #27) The Stranger**'s adventures will be chronicled by the man who created **The Doom Patrol**—Arnold Drake.

The Amazon Princess of Paradise Island must continue her battle against Inventa, so it's **WONDER WOMAN** versus "The Titanic Trials" in the **November** issue of her mag **(#208).** No sooner is that menace over, than **Wonder Woman** has to travel into space to battle "The Chessmen Of Death."

Travel to mysterious worlds beyond death to learn more true tales of **GHOSTS (#19, October)** this month. Learn the secrets of "The Body In Mystic Lake" and "The Phantom's Invisible Clue" and then read "Dead Is My Darling," for more thrills!

Shilo Norman invades a mysterious world of insect men and finds "Super-Trouble" in the **November** issue of **MISTER MIRACLE (#16).** Our newest super-escape-artist finds that things aren't always what they seem to be in this latest **Kirby** classic.

Clark Kent is sent on an assignment to Washington D.C. and is arrested for revealing government secrets! So it's **Batgirl** to the rescue during a "Wild Week-end In Washington"—in the **October** issue of **SUPERMAN (#268)** . . . plus another story of the **Fabulous World Of Krypton**—"A Tale Of Time and Tide."



Jack Kirby's amazing new hero **The Demon** meets up with the incomparable **Batman** in the **November** issue of **THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD (#109).** Learn who cries "Gotham Bay Be My Grave" in a mind-bending new book-length adventure by Bob Haney and Jim Aparo (and be sure to catch Jim's art in **Detective Comics,** beginning this month!).

Will **Sgt. Rock** finally be reunited with the combat-happy joes of Easy Co.? You'll have to get a hold of the **October** issue of **OUR ARMY AT WAR (#261)** to read the latest installment of Rock's round-the-world odyssey to find out!

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN? THE SHADOW KNOWS! and you can too, if you pick up the **first issue** of his mag **(November)** in the **second week of July.** The pulp era lives again in "The Doom Puzzle" by Denny O'Neil and Mike Kaluta. Watch for it!

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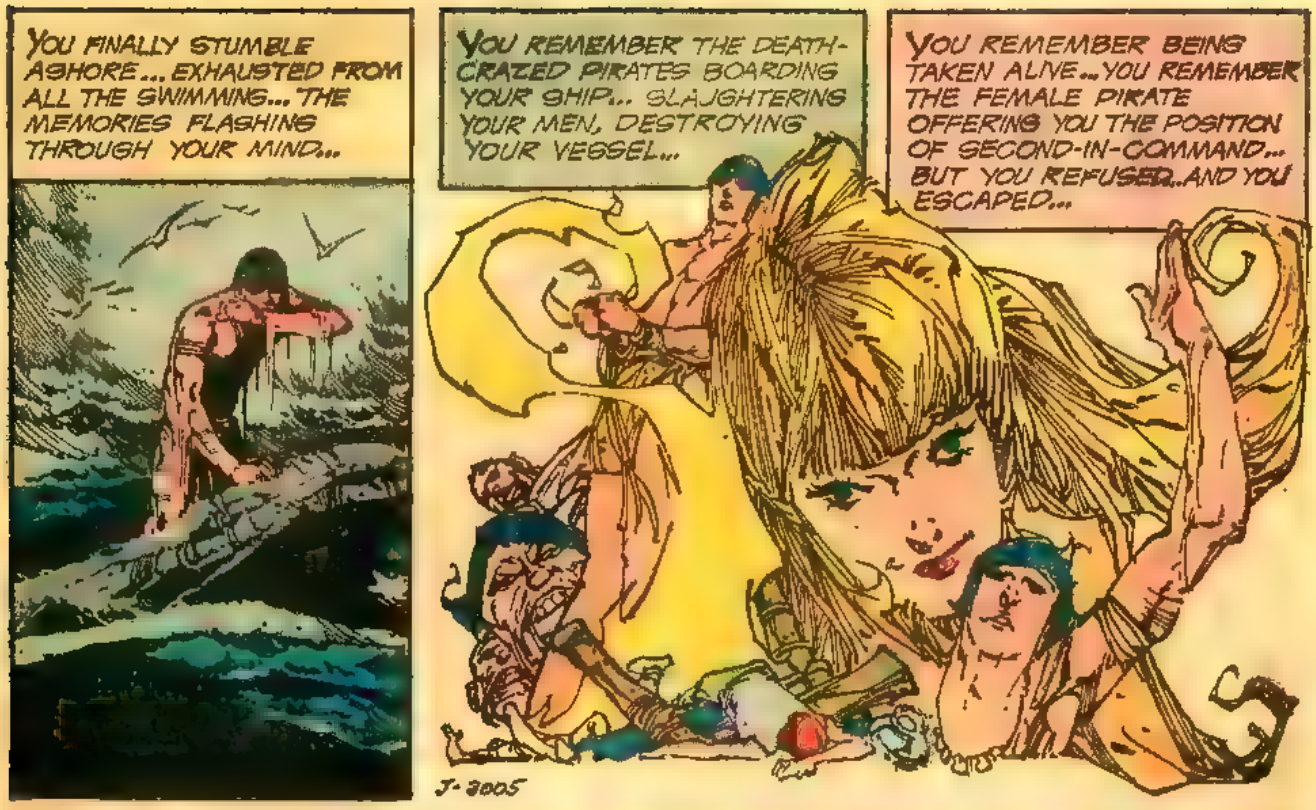
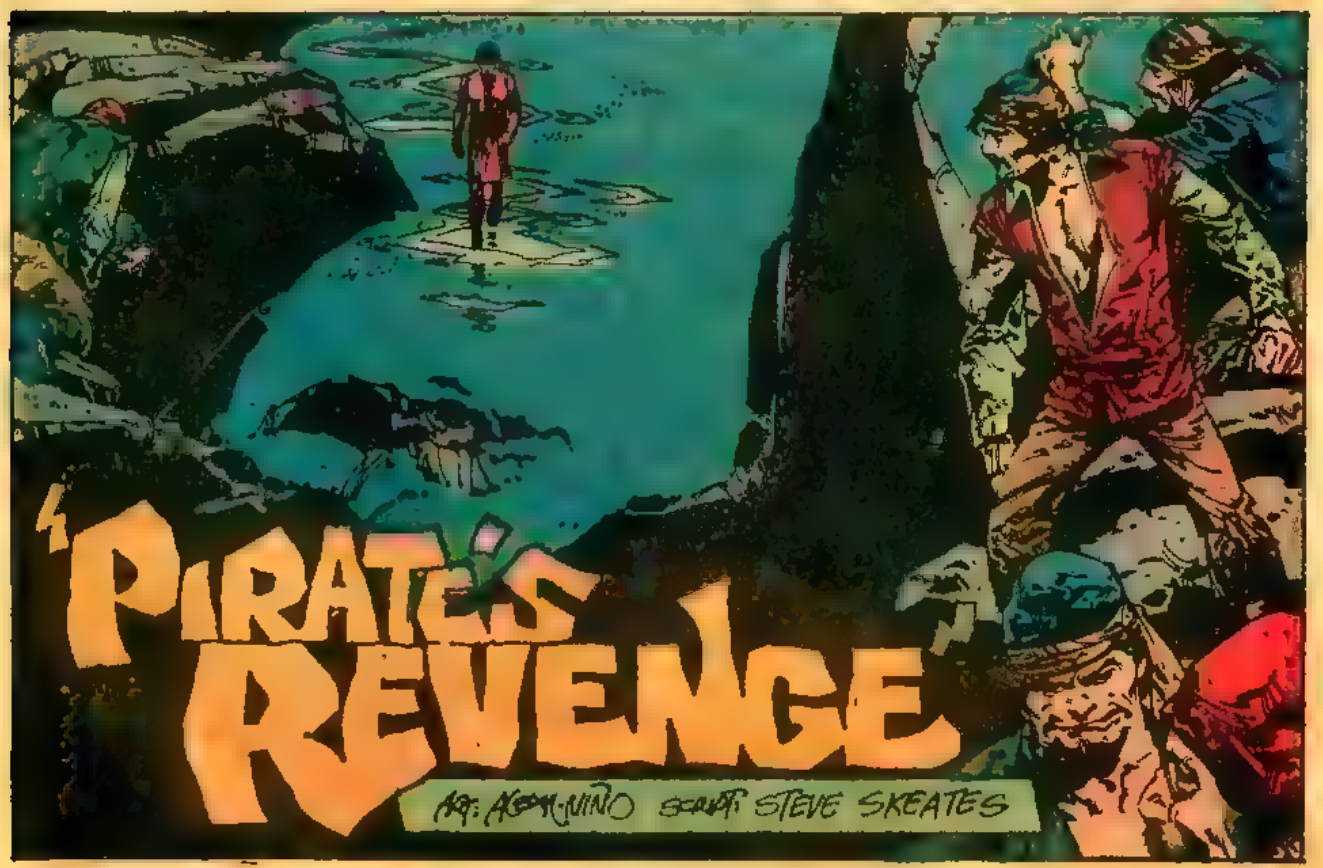
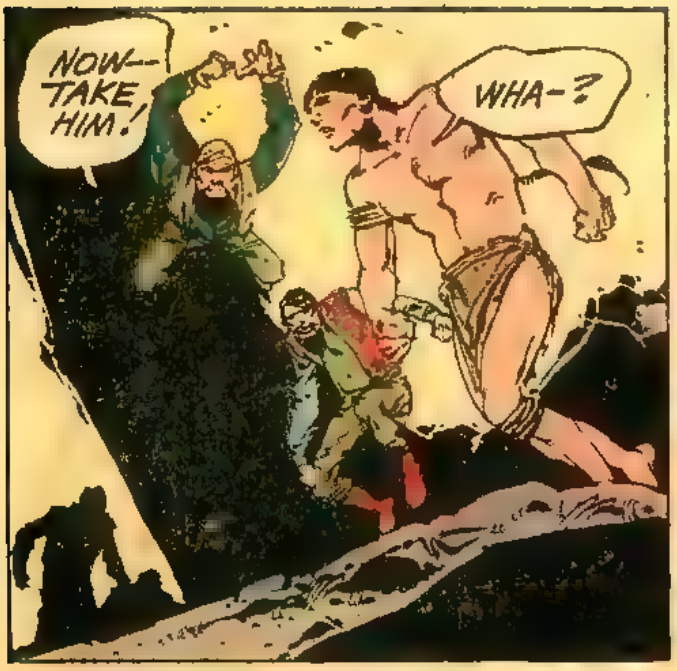
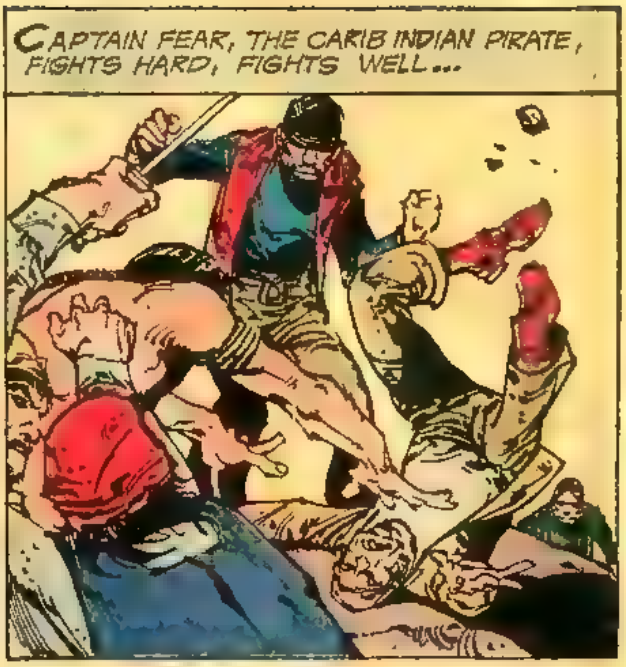

YOU FINALLY STUMBLE ASHORE... EXHAUSTED FROM ALL THE SWIMMING... THE MEMORIES FLASHING THROUGH YOUR MIND...
YOU REMEMBER THE DEATH-CRAZED PIRATES BOARDING YOUR SHIP... SLAUGHTERING YOUR MEN, DESTROYING YOUR VESSEL...
YOU REMEMBER BEING TAKEN ALIVE... YOU REMEMBER THE FEMALE PIRATE OFFERING YOU THE POSITION OF SECOND-IN-COMMAND... BUT YOU REFUSED... AND YOU ESCAPED...
J-2005

YOU ARE...
CAPTAIN FEAR
... AND NOW YOU ARE ALONE... OR SO YOU THINK...


PIRATE'S REVENGE
ART: ALEX NINO SCRIPT: STEVE SKEATES


NOW--TAKE HIM!
WHA-?


CAPTAIN FEAR, THE CARIB INDIAN PIRATE, FIGHTS HARD, FIGHTS WELL...

CAN'T KEEP THIS UP! ALL THAT SWIMMING HAS SAPPED MY STRENGTH!

...BUT FINALLY HE FALLS PREY...
UUNNGH!

SLOWLY THE BLACK CLOUD OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS IS LIFTED...
...AND REPLACED BY RECOGNITION...
IT IS NICE TO HAVE YOU BACK AMONG THE LIVING, MY DEAR!
I SUPPOSE YOU DID NOT PLAN TO SEE ME AGAIN SO SOON!
...AND CRAMPS THAT MUST BE BORNE...
YOU SHOULD NOT STRUGGLE! YOU ARE TIED FAR TOO TIGHTLY FOR IT TO AVAIL YOU ANYTHING!
IT WAS INDEED ACCOMMODATING OF YOU TO SWIM STRAIGHT TO THE ISLAND WHERE I MAKE MY HEADQUARTERS!
SOME OF MY MEN WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND CAPTURED YOU --NOT EVEN AWARE OF WHO YOU WERE!
AND...WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR ME NOW? DEATH?
NO! THAT WOULD BE FAR TOO EASY! YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE MUCH HARSHER THAN THAT!
YOU HAVE BEEN SOLD INTO SLAVERY! YOU LEAVE SOON ON A SLAVE VESSEL!

IT IS A HARD, MADDENING TRIP... MOST OF THE SLAVES ARE CHAINED BELOW DECKS...
RATHER THAN BE CHAINED, SOME OF THE SLAVES VOLUNTEER TO WORK...
...THEY ARE WATCHED CAREFULLY... GUARDED... AND ARE NOT ALLOWED TO TALK AMONG THEMSELVES.
AND WHEN ANY ARE CAUGHT TALKING TO OTHERS, THEIR PUNISHMENT IS SWIFT AND MERCILESS...
BUT CAPTAIN FEAR IS WARY AND IS NOT CAUGHT, AND HE TALKS TO AS MANY OF HIS FELLOW SLAVES AS POSSIBLE...
...HIS PLAN...
...MUTINY!
KILL!

BUT THE GUARDS ARE ARMED AND THE SLAVES ARE NOT...
HA! IT IS OVER, SCUM!
THIS SCURVY DOG WAS THE R LEADER! WE'LL MAKE HIM PAY!
HE IS WHIPPED... AND WHIPPED AGAIN... AND THEN LOCKED AWAY IN THE HOLD FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TRIP...
BUT, AS THE SHIP IS NEARING ITS DESTINATION, IT IS CAUGHT IN A STORM OF AWESOME FURY...
TRIM THE SAILS! PREPARE FOR THE WORST!
CAPTAIN! LAND UP AHEAD, SIR!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
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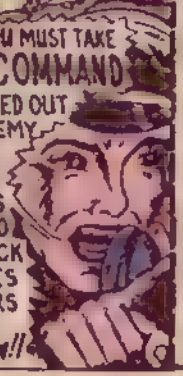

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..AT LAST!
HE IS WEAK... BUT STILL...
...DESPITE HIS WEAKNESS, HE SWIMS TOWARD SHORE. CAPTAIN FEAR, FREE AGAIN...
BUT THIS TIME AS HE STUMBLES ASHORE...
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, INDIAN!
WHA-?

OBVIOUSLY YOU ESCAPED FROM SOME SLAVE SH.P! BUT I SHALL NOT RETURN YOU!
THIS LAND! WE ARE IN THE CARRIBEAN!
MOVE, DOG!
THIS ISLAND-- IT IS MY HOME ISLAND!
BUT... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHERE DID THESE PEOPLE COME FROM? WHERE ARE MY PEOPLE?
ARE YOU SURPRISED, INDIAN, TO SEE NONE OF YOUR OWN KIND HERE? THEY DIED FIGHTING US! NOW YOUR ISLAND IS OURS! AND YOU ARE ABOUT TO HAVE THE HONOR OF BECOMING ONE OF OUR SLAVES!

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